

# ***Iowa Outdoors***

## **Iowa Department of Natural Resources**

### **www.iowadnr.com**

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## **IOWANS ASKED TO NAME NEWEST STATE PARK**

DES MOINES – The Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is holding a contest to name Iowa's newest state park. The area currently known as Banner Wildlife Area in Warren County is undergoing a transformation to become a new family recreational facility. This is only the second state park in the past 27 years to be dedicated and the first in that time to be named by the public.

“Parks belong to the people of Iowa and it is only fitting that Iowans have an opportunity to participate in naming this newest addition to our system,” said DNR Director Jeffrey Vonk.

Located between Des Moines and Indianola on Highway 65/69, Banner Wildlife Area has been in existence since 1954. Throughout the years, a number of rogue activities have taken place at Banner giving the area a bad reputation and decreasing legitimate recreational uses.

“The ideal location of the area presents a great opportunity to convert an underused, often miss-used area into a prime recreational facility,” Vonk said.

Development plans include a two-mile paved scenic bike loop that will link with the 12-mile paved bicycle trail connecting Carlisle and Indianola. Three miles of mountain bike trails will offer challenging levels for beginners and advanced riders. Two boat ramps provide access to the 59 and 15-acre ponds. There will be a number of fishing accesses, parking and picnic areas. This area will be stocked with trout during the

winter, becoming central Iowa's only trout fishery. A concession-operated shooting range and snack stand for trail users will also be developed adjacent to the area.

Park names can be entered in one of four categories:

A person's name. The person must have made a significant contribution to the Iowa State Park system or preservation of Iowa's natural resources;

Place and feature names related to the area;

Historic event names related to the area; and,

Indigenous peoples and cultures of the area.

Entries must include the proposed park name, including which category it falls under, justification for the proposed park name, and the name, address and phone number of the person submitting the entry. All entries should be mailed to Name the Park Contest; Iowa DNR; 502 East 9th Street; Des Moines, IA 50319. Entries may be submitted on the internet at [www.iowadnr/parks/info/nameform.html](http://www.iowadnr/parks/info/nameform.html). All entries must be submitted by 4:30 p.m. on April 21. A committee will select the winning entry for final approval by the Natural Resource Commission on May 13. The winner will be invited as a guest of honor at the park's dedication later this summer.

**For more details on the history of the area and the proposed recreational development, contact Angela Corio at 515-281-4579. For complete details on the contest, visit [www.iowadnr/parks/info/namethepark.html](http://www.iowadnr/parks/info/namethepark.html) or contact Heather Cline at 515-281-5602.**

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## **SCIENTISTS TRACK COLOR CODED DUCKS ACROSS IOWA**

By Lowell Washburn

Iowa Department of Natural Resources

KEOKUK--Researchers from Iowa Department of Natural Resources, Louisiana State University, and other cooperating agencies are currently trapping, banding, and color-marking lesser scaup as they move into Pool 19 of the Mississippi River near Keokuk. The objectives of the research project are to document the migration corridors and wetland habitats used by scaup [also known as bluebills] during spring migration through the upper Midwest. The project also hopes to assess body condition of migrating scaup.

Scaup populations have suffered serious declines during recent decades, and biologists hope the study will aid in learning more about the species' life cycle. Scientists are currently marking individual scaup with one of 4 colors based on their body condition and when they are captured.

Researchers are soliciting help from the public to report observations of any color-marked scaup. Observations of color-marked scaup can be reported via the internet (<http://www.iowadnr.com/wildlife>), E-mail (Scaup\_Project@LSU.EDU), phone (1-888-MINNDNR or 1-888-646-6367), or FAX (225-578-4144).

Individuals reporting observations of color-marked scaup should provide the following information: (1) date of sighting; (2) color of scaup; (3) sex of color-marked scaup if known; (4) total number of scaup observed on the same lake or wetland; (5) location of sighting (distance and direction from nearest town; lake or wetland name if known; and county and State); and (6) their name, address and phone number so that researchers can contact them for further information and send a complimentary pen-ink scaup art print.

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## **SPRING SNOW GOOSE MIGRATION INVADES IOWA**

By Lowell Washburn

Iowa Department of Natural Resources

GREENFIELD--Hundreds of thousands of lesser snow geese are currently pushing their way northward across Iowa. A spring spectacular of the highest order, the migration is hailed by scientists as one of the greatest wildlife assemblages on earth. It is a sight and sound that cannot be fully appreciated until witnessed firsthand.

According to DNR waterfowl biologist, Guy Zenner, the most impressive concentrations occur along the broad floodplains of the Missouri River corridor where snow goose numbers often reach or exceed one million birds. But along with those numbers, come problems. As contemporary populations of snow geese have continued to soar, the damage to fragile arctic nesting habitats has become dramatic and intolerable.

"Total snow goose numbers have more than tripled during the past 30 years," says Zenner. "The fragile Canadian arctic, with its extremely short growing season cannot support goose populations of that size. Today, we're literally seeing the snow geese eat themselves out of house and home."

Scientists note that foraging snow geese have already destroyed a full third of the vast arctic tundra, and that another third of the nesting grounds are severely impacted. If the damage was to stop immediately it could take a full century, perhaps more, for fragile arctic plant life to recover. In addition to threatening future survival of snow geese, the devastation is also having a negative impact on nesting ducks, shorebirds, and other migratory nesters.

In an effort to reduce the numbers of light geese, a special spring [conservation order] hunt was initiated in 1999. The goal of the emergency act was to reduce the snow

goose flock [estimated at more than 6 million birds] by 50 percent. Special regulations allowed spring hunts, liberalized shooting hours and bag limits, unplugged shotguns, and the use of electronic calls. With the sixth year of special goose hunts currently underway, biologists are encouraged as the measure shows preliminary signs of success.

"For the first time since records were kept, we are seeing the combined [regular and conservation order] harvest of snow geese reach or exceed one million birds," said Zenner.

"In Iowa, success has fluctuated with weather conditions. During the past five seasons we have harvested anywhere from around 12,000 to over 32,000 geese during the special spring [conservation order] seasons. I think it is important to note that our combined annual snow goose harvest now represents about four times the average that occurred from 1988 to 1997.

"To me, the figures are extremely encouraging and suggest that, given the appropriate time and tools, hunters may just be able to bring this population under control."

Iowa goose hunters are enjoying excellent success so far this spring, and plenty of action lies ahead. Biologists predict that good numbers of snow geese, including an increasing number of juveniles, should continue to migrate through the state during the next two weeks. This year's snow goose hunt continues through April 15.

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## **FIELD WINDBREAKS PROVIDE EROSION CONTROL AND HABITAT**

DES MOINES - Field windbreaks control soil erosion and provide shelter and food to a wide variety of wildlife species.

"A successfully functioning windbreak is a product of good planning, good planting, and good follow-up care," said Paul Tauke, forestry supervisor with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR).

A windbreak's ability to reduce wind and protect from snow will depend on its height, density, width and length. The distance that wind protection extends from the windbreak is directly proportional to its height. The most effective zones of protection will extend to a distance six to eight times its height. For example, a windbreak with a height of 30 feet will protect an area up to 240 feet.

Density also influences wind velocity. Very dense windbreaks reduce wind speed close to the barrier. Moderately dense windbreaks will reduce wind velocity over a

greater leeward distance. A moderately penetrable barrier is considered best for field windbreaks. A field windbreak should extend approximately 100 feet beyond the area to be protected. This additional footage will provide protection as winds shift from north to south.

A windbreak should have at least three rows to be effective. At least two rows should consist of trees. The remaining rows can be small trees or shrubs. Five to eight rows will be more effective, will enhance durability, and provide opportunities to diversify the windbreak's wildlife habitat potential. Ultimately, the number of rows will depend on the space available for the windbreak planting.

Selection of tree and shrub species will depend on soil, locality, and desired function of the windbreak. Planting evergreens on wet or heavy clay soil will generally not be successful. If the windbreak is intended to attract wildlife, shrubs such as ninebark, hazelnut, wild plum and/or dogwood could be incorporated into the design.

“Working with your forester is the best way to insure that you are planting the right species in the right location,” Tauke said. “Your forester can also provide information on windbreak design, site preparation, proper planting technique, and weed control.”

DNR district foresters are available for help with designing field windbreaks. A list of foresters is available at [www.iowatreeplanting.com](http://www.iowatreeplanting.com) and clicking on the district forester link.

For more information, contact Tauke at 515-242-6898 or by e-mail at [paul.tauke@dnr.state.ia.us](mailto:paul.tauke@dnr.state.ia.us).

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## **WILDLIFE HABITAT PLANTINGS CAN ADD COLOR, TOO**

AMES - Wildlife habitat plantings of trees and shrubs will provide needed food, cover and nesting sites for Iowa's mammals and birds. These plantings can also add extra beauty with a touch of color to the landscape. With species selection, the leaves, fruit and bark can add color much of the year.

Fall provides the most spectacular leaf color change. As the green chlorophyll in leaves die, the yellows and orange colors become visible. Other pigments including the reds and purples develop in the sap of leaf cells in the fall. Trees with yellow fall color are the native Cherry, Green Ash, Bur Oak, Hickory, Walnut, Sycamore, River Birch and Silver Maple. The Sugar Maple and Red Oak produce red leaves while the White Ash and White Oak produce a purple color. Attractive native shrubs to add are Arrowwood and Nannyberry for purple-red fall color.

While not spectacular for leaf color, silky dogwood produces pale blue berries that last through the fall and into the winter. Redosier dogwood has persistent white berries. Migrating birds will be seen feeding on these berries. Both dogwood species have beautiful red twigs throughout the year especially in the winter. For striking red berries that provide wildlife food throughout the winter, add Highbush Cranberry to the planting.

For the earliest splash of white in the spring, the showy Serviceberry flowers can't be beat. Add the Wild Plum for a continuation of the early display. Both species then produce purple fruit loved by wildlife.

It is now time to plan for spring wildlife habitat and reforestation plantings. For information on tree and shrub plantings and sources of affordable seedlings, visit [www.iowatreeplanting.com](http://www.iowatreeplanting.com) or call the DNR Forest Nursery at 800 856-2477.

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